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VOINAROFSKYI

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

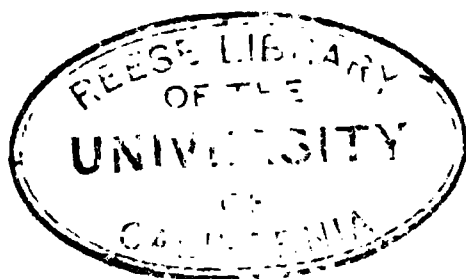
Rylov
K. F. RELAIEFF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

By T. HART-DAVIES,
Bombay Civil Service.

CALCUTTA :
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translations has become a trite subject of regret, but it may be confidently stated that the force and vigour, combined with musical rhythm, for which Russian is pre-eminently distinguished, evaporate more completely in the process of translation than the essential characteristics of any other language. It is, therefore, solely with the view of inducing a wider study in the original of a literature which has produced such great names that the present version of some of Relaiëff's poems is, with all diffidence, presented to English readers. Probably to few educated men in England is the name of Relaiëff familiar: indeed, this may claim to be the first translation from his works which has ever appeared; and partly from political reasons his writings have not obtained even in Russia the wide popularity which Pouschkin, Lermontoff, and I may add Koltzoff, enjoy. But he has always appeared a singularly interesting poet to me—interesting alike from his genius and melancholy fate, and it would be well if attention were drawn to the works of one whom I venture to place in a very high rank among nineteenth century poets. There are, as Plato says, many wand-bearers, but few inspired; and the world cannot afford to lose sight of one whom most of the educated portion of his

countrymen are agreed to regard as considerably higher than a mere *ναρθηκοφόρος*.

Of the inadequacy of my rendering no one is more painfully aware than myself, and much that may appear trivial and commonplace in the English ceases to be so when read in the music of the original. At the same time it cannot be denied that Reliaieff's works are in many respects the productions of youth. Had his life been prolonged, a man of his earnest temperament would, doubtless, have 'marched in ranks of better equipage,' and produced works more worthy of his genius. But, in accordance with that melancholy rule which has hitherto seemed to condemn all Russian poets to an early and untimely doom, Reliaieff was but twenty-six when he expiated his love of liberty by his death, so that, as in the case of Keats, we can only speculate on the power he might have developed in maturity.

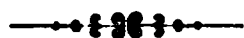
I have adhered throughout to the metres of the original, and have endeavoured to represent, as well as I was able, the irregularity of the rhymes. I must take this opportunity of acknowledging with gratitude the assistance given me by M. Aksakoff of Moscow in the study of the poet's works.

T. H. D.

ERRATA.

- Page 5, line 5 from bottom, for “*perora*” read “*per ora*.”**
„ 12, „ 2, *add “the” after “as in.”*
„ „ 4, *for “Russia” read “Russian.”*
„ „ last line, *for “ἐμπαίσει” read “ἐμπαίζει.”*
„ 23, line 6 from bottom, *for “yokes” read “yoke.”*
In Table of Contents, line 7, for “Goverich” read “Czarevich.”

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INTRODUCTION.

THE materials for a life of Relaiëff are not numerous. There is a short biography attached to his works, and from a small brochure, entitled "*Materialee dlya Biographiëe Relaiëffa*," I have gathered some incidents of his career. Petrow, in his otherwise admirable history of Russian literature, does not mention him; and in fact, up to the year 1872, his works were prohibited in Russia altogether. Ancelot, in his "*Six mois en Russie*," mentions and translates some of "*Nalevaiko*," but the other notices of him are scanty in the extreme. Schnitzler's "*Secret History of the Court and Government of Alexander Nicholas*," I have found useful as containing a lengthy account of the disastrous conspiracy which broke out in 1826, and its denouement; and Baron Korf's history of the same event is copious in detail.

Kondratieë (Conrad) Fedorovitch Relaiëff, according to his own account published in a journal called the *Pole Star*, was born September 18, 1795; according to the account given by some of his relations, in 1797; and according to Kropotoff, who wrote his life, in 1789. This latter date can hardly

be correct. He speaks of himself as "young" in a letter written in 1823, and as in analogous case of Catullus ('hedera juvenilia cinctus tempora') a man of over thirty would not in Russia describe himself as "molodoi." His father was a retired lieutenant-colonel, and appears to have treated his family with great harshness, not unfrequently shutting his wife up in a cellar in order to maintain his authority as head of the house. She, to free her son from the parental tyranny, according to Kropotoff's account, placed the young Relaiëff in the First Cadet Corps in January, 1801. While there he learnt Polish and French, and familiarized himself so far with German as to become a member of the first rank in the Masonic Lodge "Flaming Star," where all the debates were carried on in German. In 1814 he joined the reserve artillery brigade—the army then was the only possible career for a gentleman in Russia—and served abroad in the campaign against the French. On his return he joined the horse artillery, and while quartered in the Ostrogoff district in 1817 he fell in love with the daughter of a proprietor of the neighbourhood, Michael Gregory Tevyashoff. His marriage was opposed by his mother, but—*ἀμαχος γὰρ ἐμπαίσει θεὸς Ἀφροδίτα*—love carried the day, and

at the request of his future father-in-law he resigned the service, and married Natalie Alexandrovna Tevyashoff in January, 1820. His family consisted of one son, and a daughter who is still living at Moscow. After his marriage he took up his residence entirely at St. Petersburg, where his first appointment was that of Secretary to the Criminal Court of Assize, in which capacity he fulfilled his duties with that conscientiousness which always distinguished him. He afterwards became secretary to the Russian-American Company; his services in this post were, according to the testimony of Ivan V. Prokopheff, one of the directors, "distinguished and honorable." While thus employed he entered into friendly relations with M. Moordveenof and Speranski, the minister to whose efforts the codification of the law under Alexander I. was due. This was the period of his greatest activity both literary and political. The history of the unfortunate conspiracy in which he engaged, and which cost him his life, demands separate treatment, but his literary efforts may now be briefly summarized. The first medium through which he began to publish his works was the *Neva Spectator* (*Nevski Zreitel*), to which paper he contributed in 1820. Afterwards he

wrote for the Literary Appendix and the Literary Almanack, and a paper called the "Northern Bee," edited by his friend Bulgarin. He also supported a journal which bore the magnificent title of "Rivality of Enlightenment and Beneficence" (Sorevnovatel Prosvetshenya ee Blagotvorennya), which was the St. Petersburg organ of the society of lovers of Russian literature, of which society he became a member in 1821. With his friend Bestoujeff he brought out those editions of what he called Almanacs, but which really consisted of collections of small works. It was at the beginning of 1825 that he published Voinarofskyi, the poem which I have translated, and which is the longest of his works; and also his "Doomes," or Thoughts, some of which appear in the present volume.

His father's natural daughter was an inmate of his house during the last few years of his life, and her levity of conduct occasioned a duel between Relaiëff and a man named Shakofsky, the result of which was a wound in the foot, but otherwise his domestic life appears to have been a happy one. In the "materiale," the warm affection existing between his mother and himself is vividly portrayed, and the strong efforts which

both his wife and his mother made to dissuade him from his fatal enterprize show the extent of the self-sacrifice to which he consciously doomed himself.

It now remains to sketch briefly the history of the plot in which Relaiëff took so leading a part, and in which he so nobly abandoned his life in the cause of freedom. Though the conspiracy did not actually burst out into open rebellion till 1826, its origin is to be sought much earlier. An old Russian general, quitting French Flanders with his regiments in 1816, observed : " Instead of sending us home, the emperor would do better to drown us all in the Baltic," and the event justified his apprehensions. The gospel which the French had preached at the mouth of the cannon through Europe still found its way into the ideas of their conquerors, and the imitative Russians were peculiarly susceptible of foreign influence. As early as 1816, secret societies were formed by officers who had become acquainted during the campaign with similar institutions in other parts of Europe. Mouravieff, Troubetzkoi Pestel, and Apostol were the most prominent leaders; and their object at first was simply to secure better government, their plans not being subversively revolutionary.

The first societies dissolved and underwent many phases before they became finally crystallized into a renovated association of sterner views and more decided tendencies. New constitutions were drawn up, and the army became impregnated with revolutionary doctrines. In 1823, Relaiëff became one of the presidents in the place of Troubetzkoi, who had been selected on account of his ancestral claims, he being one of the descendants of Rurik; and it was finally resolved to seize the emperor and proclaim the new order of things. The death of Alexander I. delayed the outburst of the conspiracy, but the leaders of the association took advantage of the somewhat doubtful title of Nicholas to the throne to incite the troops to mutiny in favour of his brother Constantine. The ruthless manner in which the outbreak was crushed in St. Petersburg, and the hopeless failure of the insurrection in the south, are too well known to need description; and indeed it was only too obvious that from the beginning the enterprize was destined to end in overwhelming defeat. Russian revolutionists found then, as they still find now, their chief obstacle in the intense apathy and stupidity of the lower classes. It was perfectly in vain to attempt to incite the soldiers to

any act of violence for an abstract idea such as liberty or a republic, and the leaders were reduced to the subterfuge of assuring their men that they were acting by the orders of the late Czar in proclaiming Constantine emperor. This at all events was an intelligible theory to the rank and file, and their conception of the real schemes of their officers may be shown by the following anecdote. :—"Why," said Mouravieff to his men one day, "why do we need either Constantine or Nicholas, we can do without either; shout, long live the Republic." The word was new to the stolid soldiery, and a silence ensued; at last one said: "We will shout, long live the Republic, if it pleases you, colonel, but who is to be emperor?" The story of the men, who supposed that the "constitution" for which they were told to cheer in connexion with Constantine was the wife of that very mediocre prince, has become a stock anecdote to illustrate the intelligence of the Russian private; and it was only too plain that, with elements like these, the conspiracy was fore-doomed to hopeless failure. The army, even had they been successful, would not have tolerated any form of government but an empire, and an era of revolutionary troubles would have opened for Russia.

No one saw all this more clearly than Relaiëff, and it is a mark of the grand heroism of the man that he calmly persisted in his course in spite of the consciousness that his efforts would be absolutely fruitless, supported by the belief that his example might in after ages encourage some other patriot to make the same effort in the cause of liberty with success. No one knew more thoroughly than he did that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church, a thought which he has put into spirited verse at the end of Nalevaiko's Confession—'Car-mine perfidiæ quod post nulla arguet ætas,'—and so he went forth like Saul at Gilboa, or as Otho sent out his legions at Bedriacum, with the certainty of impending death, yet buoyed up by unflinching courage and high resolve. Nor did his courage, like that of some of his fellow conspirators, notably Troubetzkoi, fail him at the end; there is a grand and touching resignation in his last letter to his wife, written just before his execution, and a calm submission, as to inevitable fate, to the will of the Czar, almost akin to the proud humility of the Socratic farewell: 'It is now time that we depart, I to die, and you to live; but which of us has the better destiny is unknown to all except the gods.' His death

seemed to him merely the logical result of a life devoted to ideas in advance of his age, and the same simple renunciation of life, which glorified Antigone—‘*θάρσει, σὺ μὲν εἴης, ἡδ’ ὁ ἐμὴ ψυχὴ πάλαι τέθνηκεν*’—though supported by the full confidence in a faith of which Antigone with nothing before her, but ‘the joyless asphodel meadow, and drear Cocytus with his languid stream’ could form no conception, ennobled his last moments.

The commission of enquiry which sat on the ringleaders of the plot sent in a report to the emperor, based on evidence which has never seen the light; and the emperor, on this report, sentenced five of the leaders to death by hanging, and the others to various terms of banishment and imprisonment. On July 25th, 1826, Pestel, Mouravieff-Apostol, Bestoujeff-Roumine, Kakhofski, and Relaiëff were hung on the rampart of the fortress opposite the small decayed wooden church dedicated to the Trinity, which then stood on the banks of the Neva. Each regiment quartered at St. Petersburg sent a company to witness the execution, and after the ceremony of degrading from military rank three of the conspirators whose lives were spared, the five condemned men were placed on the scaffold. Pestel and Kakhofski were strangled immediately;

but the ropes slipped over the heads of the others who fell uninjured. The platform was replaced, and the ropes again adjusted. During the interval Relaiëff exclaimed, "Must it be said that nothing succeeds with me, not even death?" or according to some accounts his words were, "Accursed country, where they know neither how to plot, nor how to judge, nor how to hang." However this time the rope did not give way, and shortly afterwards the troops were defiled in silence before the inanimate bodies of the five martyrs to liberty. All was over before 5 o'clock in the morning.

Relaiëff's character has thus been summed up by Schnitzler: "He was moved by principles rather than by passion, and acted only after mature reflection. He was devoted to theories abstract indeed, but disinterested; in short, sense of duty was his guiding motive. Though a republican, he admitted that monarchy in such a state of society as the Russian could be the only ark of refuge, but he was indignant to see it absolute, and unlimited; he was shocked that despotism should exist on the throne, and slavery in the cabinet, and was grieved at the absence of that which constitutes the strength of a state, a quick sense of honour in the higher classes, and more dignity in all." The

firmness of his character was well illustrated by the dauntless manner with which he confronted Iakoubouwitch, one of the most violent of the conspirators. Relaiëff threatened to stab or denounce him if he persisted in striking the blow before matters were ripe, and Iakoubouwitch was so convinced of the reality of the threat that he abandoned his hastily-formed intention. To those whose notions of youthful genius are inseparably connected with eccentricity, and the ardent pursuit of pleasure—or too often, as in the case of Lermontoff or Poe, that ‘certain likeness of it’ as it is called in the Phœdrus, ‘which goes by its name’—it may appear strange to see the high and stern moral purpose which accompanied the poetic fancy and enthusiasm of Relaiëff. But rare as it is, the combination is not unprecedented, and we may picture Relaiëff as a lineal descendant of those old Hebrew bards with whom poetry was made subservient to keen national feelings, and who were politicians first and poets afterwards. That a man so rarely gifted should have found life not worth having under the Russian empire of that day is alone sufficient to condemn ‘sans phrase,’ a government which could only exist on the condition that all independent thought was stifled.

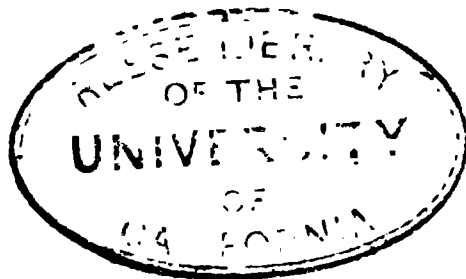
It would be outside the scope of an introduction to attempt anything like a comprehensive analysis of the position occupied by Relaiëff in the literature of his country, but it may be well to trace briefly the conditions which gave birth to the great outburst of literary activity in Russia at the beginning of the present century. The two great events, which have most profoundly influenced both the history and literature of Russia, were the introduction of Christianity and the Tartar domination. In early times the folklore and simple legends which marked the infancy of all races were not wanting in Russia. We meet again in other forms with the water nymphs (the Roussalki), and the dragon hero (Zmei bogatyr) of Greek mythology, fable blending with and gradually developing into history. Then with Vladimir's conversion in 988 came a perfect flood of theological writing, such as distinguished the same era of development in Western Europe. But this stage was not yet passed when all culture in Russia was rudely checked by the Tartar invasion, and the literature for three centuries consists but of mournful songs and sermons inculcating resignation and submission to the will of God. Now oppressed by Tartars, now by Poles, at times by their

own rulers, such as Iwan, the Terrible, the Russian people could see no resource save in apathy and submissiveness; and to this day the plaintiveness of the music and the pathetic character of most of the national songs still testify to this long period of humiliation and despair. With Peter the Great, European literature was imperiously thrust on a people totally unfitted to receive or appreciate it, and academies and journals were exhibited by the emperor ready-made before the eyes of his astonished subjects. So that when Europe was beginning to shake off classicism, Lermontosoff introduced into Russia the stately Alexandrines and the frigid sentiments of the school of Racine. To Soumarokoff, and after him, to Kniajnine, belongs the honor of harmonizing Russian thought with European forms, and under the patronage of Catherine II. literature became the fashion, and the sentimentalities of the Rousseau school began to exercise a decided influence. But the strong nationalizing tendency always shook off the yokes of foreign imitation, and Derjanine, Joukofsky, and Batuchkoff finally established the school of romantic and national poetry. To this school Relaieff, as well as Pouschkin and Lermontoff, belonged, representing in Russia what may be briefly

described as the Byronic spirit, that great sentiment of profound unrest which overspread Europe, and which in France obtained its most signal development. But the Byronic scorn of men and world-weariness hardly finds a distinct echo in the poets of Russia. Pouschkin, for example, always seems to be—and his ‘lines to the Poet,’ and the ‘Populace’ may be taken as illustrations—rather individually blasé than impressed with an objective despair at the sight of a universe weltering in wretchedness, and not to be renovated even by the drastic remedies of a French revolution. But in Relaiëff, dominated as much as any of his contemporaries by the influence of the revolutionary writers, the hopeless condition of public liberty in Russia supplied the motive for despair, and an abiding source of melancholy. Possessed of a more intensely national spirit than perhaps any contemporary poet, he sought to embody in action the principles of which the others only dreamed, and the tendency to exalt strenuous deeds and unbroken courage appear in all his works. He delights to dwell on past scenes of national heroism, as in the life of a warrior like Voinarofskyi or Nalevaiko the representatives of freedom crushed by overwhelming might. To a future age his own career

may perhaps supply an example as invigorating as were to him the legends of long-past warriors, and after generations of Russians may profit by his self-sacrifice, and under a new régime of political liberty, hail him as one of the noble band of martyrs to a great cause. He at all events counted not his life dear unto himself, but like Browning's Grammarian

He ventured neck or nothing,—Heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure,
“Wilt thou trust death or not?” He answered, “yes,
Hence with life's pale lure.”



Voinarovskiy.

In that wild land of storms and snows
Where Lena's mighty river flows,
Against the landscape's dazzling white
There darkens on the gazer's sight
A row of huts in gloomy line
Fenced round with trellises of pine,
Rising from out the snowy deep,
And wooden "oorts," * while from the steep
The high church top looks down with pride
O'er the drear valley stretching wide,
Far off dark forests murmuring sound,
The snowy plains gleam all around,
While flinty hills, some low, some high,
Across the scene in ridges lie.

Here all is gloomy, nature here
An aspect wears both sad and drear :
Here streams with hoarse and angry cry
Rumble terrific, o'er the sky
Storms threaten, and clouds lowering fly.
To this wild country's barren plains
None come save those condemned to chains ;

While the dark winter's chilling force
Drags out its long and weary course,
Days after days pass slowly by
In hopeless dull monotony,
And neath grim savagery's sway
Yakutskians pass their lives away ;
But once throughout the circling year
Or twice, sad wearied trains appear
With soldier guards, a convict band ;
At times from some far distant land
Or neighbouring province to this spot
Remote, almost by men forgot,
The Russian merchants come to buy
The furs which Yakutsk's plains supply.
At once the village wakes to life
Bustling and noisy, while the strife
Of bargaining tongues resounds amain
Where once grim silence held her reign.
Those who in Yakutsk's deserts dwell
And Ookagir come here to sell
Their goods, and bring fur-tribute due ;
And here at times the eye may view
The wild Tungus, and drilled Cossáck
With long pike slung across his back.
'Tis then that winter's iron band
Is loosed from off the gloomy land,

The deep green forest's bending trees
Whisper beneath the vernal breeze,
While through the glades in softest tones
The Lena murmurs to the stones :
And then those bright hopes almost slain
To the poor convict come again,
And as he labours in the mine

At ceaseless toils that know no rest,
There comes a joy almost divine

An instant to his anguished breast ;
O'er his dark heavy-laden soul
Calm waves of quiet seem to roll,
His deep-seared crime-stained brow the while
Is lightened by a forcéd smile.

But lo ! a man's form, who is he
Who from his house comes stealthily
Through the dim morning's vapours dank
Towards the broad river's cliff-like bank ?
A hat and Russian coat he wears,
Around his waist a belt he bears,
A gun is slung across his back,
He well might seem some bold Cossáck
Who o'er the steppe by Dnieper's tides
Armed for the battle fearless rides ;
Unquiet was his look and mien

On every feature might be seen

A deep, severe, and settled gloom,
And on his sad and careworn face
His restless thoughts had left a trace
Drawn by the cruel hand of doom;
He stretched his hand out towards the west,
His eyes gleamed fire on every side,
While burning torments racked his breast
Thus in his anguish loud he cried :

“ My native plains, my native land !

“ Which I an exile ne'er shall see,

“ Where tombs of my forefathers stand

“ Ne'er to be kissed again by me.

“ The flame burns bright, it matters not,

“ My aid avails not, far away

“ In shameful exile 'tis my lot

To languish all my dreary day.

“ My native plains, my native land !

“ Which I an exile ne'er shall see

“ Where tombs of my forefathers stand

“ Ne'er to be kissed again by me.

Thus wailed he and a moment stood

Upon the brink of Lena's flood,

Then to the forest turned him back
By some scarce-seen half-hidden track,
The dark and dripping pines he neared,
And in the thicket disappeared.
An exile he, none knew his name,
Long since to that dark land he came,
Brought thither, so the story ran,
In covered car, that none might scan
His features, that no friends might meet,
Or with a smile the wanderer greet.
Grey his dark locks and beard had turned,

But on his form was seen no mark
That fatal stamp had not been burned

Which tells of crimes of import dark ;
Unscarred his brow with that fell brand,
Placed by the hangman's ruthless hand.

But still a look more fierce and grim
Than dwelt in any was in him,
Yet he was calm, such calm as broods
O'er Lake Baikal's^{*} unruffled floods
Ere the wild storm, and as at night

Through the surrounding murky gloom
When slumbers all the tempest's might

There burns a fire upon the tomb,
So keenly shone his eyes of flame
Of whom men knew not e'en the name,

All nature round was grim and wild,
Alone like one from men exiled
He wandered, and among the crew
Of his companions none he knew,
On all a glance of sternness threw.

Our famous Müller* on a time
Dwelt in this cold and wooded clime,
And wrought those labours which all ages
Read in his scientific pages ;
He seated in his humble home
Capricious fate could overcome,
And slaked from nature's ample scroll
The thirst for knowledge in his soul ;
Far from his well-loved fatherland
Drawn to this barren desert strand
By that keen passion—all to know,
He learned what nature here could show
When rain and storm forbade to roam
Outside the four walls of his home,
His pleasure 'twas to list to lays
Which told of long-past famous days,
Of the great deeds of bold Ermak*
The chief of many a brave Cossák,
His dauntless marches 'gainst his foes
Far in this realm of cold and snows ;

And oft-times would he wend his way
To where the ice-bound ocean lay,
And many an hour would wander free
O'er the wild hills or snow-clad lea.
'The flaming light which ever turned
And in the vault of heaven's blue burned
He followed like the sun, and now
To Kangalatskia's rocky brow
He sought to go, when o'er the earth
'The season came for summer's birth ;
All things seemed strange to Müller's eye
Wild nature's savage majesty,
The climate ruthless, fierce, and grand,
The simple manners of the land.

Once when the crackling frost had bound
The hardened earth, with many a hound
Matchless, of pure Siberian race,
Through the grim woods he urged the chase,
In snow-shoes clad—his destined prey
A gallant stag—while round him lay
Dark shades, and silence ruled the day ;
On all sides pines primeval stood,
The ancient tenants of the wood,
And cedars grey with riméd frost
With branches thickly intercrossed,

Like some tent-roof stretched o'er with care
Lest ray of sun should enter there ;
A pathless wild—o'er stunted trees
And snowy mounds the wild stag flees,
Straining in desperate haste he goes
Upon his back his horns he throws,
And through the pine trunks on the sight
His dark form flashes in his flight.
On on he flies,—the death shot rings
To sudden check his course it brings,
He stumbles, reels, and on the snow
Covered with blood the stag falls low,
An anxious look may Müller cast
Where his wild quarry breathes his last,
Through the thick boughs he sees his prey,
And through the brushwood bursts his way,
And now the hunter comes in view
With fur-trimmed cap of dusky hue
Enveloped in his dark fur-fold,
A gallant hunter, skilled and bold.

The unknown exile there was seen
With stern-set brow and gloomy mien,
Savage the dress and arms he bore
Forlorn and sad the look he wore ;
The stranger gazed on him with dread,
But feared in this deserted place

Not knowing where the pathways led
To wander, so with rapid pace
O'ercoming all his terror went
Like arrow from the bow-string sent
To meet him, and him thus bespake :
" Whoe'er thou art for pity's sake
" Be guide to me for hither come
" Wrapt in the chase far far from home
" I wander, and in this wild place
" Bewildered can no longer trace
" The way which leads to my abode,
" Tell me, I pray thee, on which road
" Does Yakutsk lie ? " " The road is near,"
He answered, " but one hour from here,
" In yonder vale, but all around
" Is brushwood thick and rugged ground,
" In the dark night 'twere almost vain
" For thee to seek the distant plain,
" The shades of evening fall e'en now,
" But to my poor abode do thou
" With me proceed, and in my ' oort '
" Thou may'st refreshing slumber court
" And when again returns the day
" Thy arduous chase once more essay."

Together through the wild they went,
The light of day was almost spent,

Scarce now appeared the heaven's sheen,
The night had come, and o'er the scene
The sad moon lonely in the sky
Shone in her silvery majesty,
And covered "oort" and barren wild
Touched with her pale beams shining mild,
The exile's home they reached at last
And quickly through the door he past,
Then on the flint the steel he rung,
And on the peat the sparks he flung,
At once the hearth responsive glowed
Through the dark shades, each glimmer showed
A house deserted; to the sight
A broadsword glitters in the light,
O'er guns and lance-points gleamed the blaze,
And long knife-hilts met Müller's gaze,
But never from his host aside
He turned his gaze, but strove to hide
The fear his heart would not confess
As mute he stood, and motionless.
His host upon the embers blew
And lit a lamp, and forward drew
A bench and pine wood table rough,
Draped with a cloth of coarse-spun stuff;
Caressingly his guest he led
To where the frugal board was spread;

Then Müller fixing on his host

A piercing look, intent to know
What chance had brought him to this coast.

Upon Siberia turned the flow
Of mutual talk, each answer made
His strange host's eagerness betrayed.
With even livelier grace he spoke,
Then suddenly the converse broke,
Of Russia's Czar, that monarch great
To ask and of his country's fate :
His words with wonder Müller heard,
With transport all his soul was stirred.
For who in this wild spot could hear
Of Europe, and those pleasures dear,
To minds refined nor feel surprise ?
For Müller now in stranger wise
Homeless, an orphan, two years past
Had wandered in this barren waste,
And now, oh wonder unforeseen !
For the first time his soul had been
Refreshed with converse ; he forgot
The sorrows of his lonely lot
In marvel at the noble face,
The wealth of thought, the charm, the grace
Of all the grey-haired exile said.

And at his deep emotion's flow

His eyes lit up with passion's glow,
As fast the hours in talking sped.
So they their whole souls in their speech
Like friends unbosomed each to each
In sympathy, in this wild spot
Though wearied Müller e'en forgot
Count of the passing hours to keep,
Forgot the call to tranquil sleep
But eager with attentive ear
Prepared the exile's tale to hear :

"Then would'st thou learn," the Unknown said,
"Thou noble stranger guest, my name
"And how to this wild land I came,
"Yet since my steps were hither led
"Exiled, to none have I e'er told
"The tale which I to thee unfold ;
"The men who live in this lone place,
 "*They* would have understood me not,
"They are a wild and savage race,
 "The thrilling tale of my sad lot
"Their breasts would not have moved, but I
 "The secret of my fate to thee,
"The thoughts which in my bosom lie,
 "Will now reveal right willingly,
"Thou science in thy native land

"Hast shown, and thou wilt understand
"All my sad tale, all wilt thou weigh,
"And me, poor wretch, wilt not betray."

"Perchance thou wonderest how sad fate
"Doth upon mortal's footsteps wait—
"But now, though mean his dress may be,
"Learn thou that he who sits by thee
"Is Voinarofskyi, once the friend

"And nephew of Mazeppa bold ; "

"Perchance my sad tale has been told,
"My woes and troubles without end
"E'en in thy land—thou seest me now,
"Thou seest how gloomy is my brow,
"I wander, wild, forlorn, and wan,
"Mine eyes are sunk, my flesh is gone,
"And on my front deep wrinkles show
"The sadness which my soul doth know,
"The marks of martyrdom impressed
"By those dark thoughts which fill my breast.
"Amid these rocks and deserts wild
"Like some poor wretch for life exiled,
"Some convict sentenced to the chain,
"I linger, and my fevered brain
"Savage ideas begin to hold,
"And all my soul becomes as cold

“ And cruel as this ruthless coast—
“ Siberian realm of endless frost :
“ No joys are mine, love, friendship’s zest
“ Alike are strangers to my breast,
“ A sadness weighs on me like lead.
“ To sympathy my soul is dead,
“ And from my fellow-men I fly
“ As though I were their enemy,
“ I cannot bear their pitying look,
“ They my complainings cannot brook,
“ For who, when banished to the wild
“ For country, honor’s sake exiled,
“ Would not prefer a foeman’s hate
“ To foeman’s pity for his state ?

“ Yet still with grief regard me not,
“ Express no sorrow for my lot,
“ And the deep anguish ne’er reveal
“ Which in my martyred soul I feel,
“ Though now an instant lulled to rest
“ The pain is quiet in my breast.
“ I tell thee, stranger, ’twas my will
“ That convict men should shun me still,
“ I as a phantom oft appeared,
“ They my dark figure ever feared,
“ I frightened them with my grim mien

“ That rocks might lie our paths between :
“ That so perchance as long years passed
“ Peace might be mine again at last
“ Once I knew joy, and love’s sweet care,
 “ Of friendship’s brimming cup I quaffed,
 “ I drank my fill of passion’s draught,
“ Happy was I and free as air
“ My childish years passed swift away
“ Where dancing streamlets wandering stray,
“ Like some fleet dream or vision light
 “ My joys but for a little space
 “ Abode, and in their vacant place
“ Came but a blank, the joy of fight
“ Was vain, vain too were love’s delight
“ Turmoil of passion, grieving ruth,
“ And all the ardent dreams of youth.

“ To the fierce Tartar was I foe,
“ Foe to the Pole, and oft would go
“ In hot pursuit on Palée’s track
 “ And sought to die by hostile sword
 “ In combat with the brave chief’s horde,
“ Or come a glorious victor back:
“ Oft would it chance my gallant steed
 “ Across the empty trackless plain
“ Would bear me on at whirlwind speed
 “ From the opposing horseman’s train ;

“ Freedom we breathed, and loved her breath,
“ And oft would we who mocked at death
“ Unsleping o’er the wild steppe borne
“ Taste but a handful of dry corn,
“ Heav’n’s air to us was meat ; and when
“ We went, a band of gallant men,
“ On some wild raid, the bright star showed
“ And lighted up our darkling road,
“ Or else the heaped mounds we traced
“ By the wind howling o’er the waste :
“ Then like a cloud in thund’rous skies
“ We roused the stillness with our cries,
“ In some strange land in wild foray ;
“ The hostile troops we swept away,
“ Village and town it was our joy
“ Alike to level and destroy,
“ Rapine and fear around we spread,
“ The foeman’s bands in panic fled,
“ While some from us with fear distraught
“ With base and servile tribute bought
“ The doubtful friendship which they sought.

“ Once by my fiery spirit led
“ Which knew no terror, at the head
“ Of but few troopers, men who ne’er
“ Shrank from what men could do or dare,

“ A crowd of foes in fierce foray
“ I met ; the fight the livelong day
“ Unceasing raged, by our attack
“ The stubborn Pole was driven back,
“ His ranks were mixed, and soon the foe
“ Sought on the mountains back to throw
“ His scattered bands ; the plain we held,
“ When on a sudden round there yelled
“ The Tartars’ savage shout, amazed
“ The Poles stood, trembling as they gazed,
“ Then hostile troops in serried ranks
“ In front, behind, on both our flanks
“ Attacked us, and on every side
“ Their whistling shafts unceasing plied.
“ In vain I issued stern commands
“ Still closer pressed the Tartar bands,
“ And from the fatal battle field
“ Along the waste and barren weald
“ Ere long my troopers scattered fled ;
 “ The hot pursuit behind I heard
 “ Fainting my gallant steed I spurred ;
“ With wounds and weariness half-dead
“ I flew like arrow from the bow
“ Fearing my capture by the foe
“ Lest I a prisoner should be
“ Immured in base captivity.

" Soon the marauding Tartar band
 " Ceased their pursuit, and I was free,
" And on the frontier of my land
 " Our homes already I could see ;
" Already joyful I discerned
" The fires which in the earth-huts burned,
" Methought at length I had returned
" To home and friends at headlong speed,
" When suddenly my gallant steed,
" Worn out with toil, all spent his force,
" Swerved and fell staggering in his course
" Close by my native country's bound
" Dragging me with him to the ground.

" Near the steppe-mound the livelong day
" By my dead steed alone I lay,
" Above me the blue vault of heaven,
" Within my soul with grief was riven,
" The sweat upon my temple stood,
" And from my wounds gushed streams of blood,
" I called for help, but none was there
" To hear my feebly-uttered prayer,
" The scarce-born sound the desert air
" Just stirred, and then away it died
" Upon the lone steppe stretching wide.

" Deep silence reigned ; about the mound

“ Scarce did the wind’s sad moaning sound,
“ Soon lighting up the shades of night
“ The crescent moon appeared to sight,
“ Swimming athwart the silent skies,
 “ All still and motionless I lay
 “ Like one whose soul had passed away,
“ Above me gloating o’er my eyes—
“ Full o’er my doom’d eyeballs’ view—
“ The carrion crow impatient flew,
“ Sudden about the mound I heard
“ A rustling sound, a form appeared,
“ A young Cossák, a maiden fair
“ With figure veiled stood by me there ;
 “ A timid glance on me she bent,
 “ A look of tender pity blent
“ In her fixed gaze with mute despair.

“ That moment ne’er can I forget,
“ Delicious instant when we met ;
“ That lovely vision haunts me yet,
 “ Against stern fate’s relentless stroke
“ A solace to the martyr sent ;
 “ The soft caressing words she spoke,
“ The pitying look upon me bent,
“ Her tender joy when to the shade
“ Of her protecting hut conveyed

“ The sufferer ’neath her father’s care
“ Was placed and rescued from despair.—
“ All these sweet memories haunt me still,
“ For me, poor wanderer, faint and ill,
“ What care she showed, what tender thought,
“ What gentle ministration wrought !
“ Each wish or fancy at her side
“ By her fond care was gratified ;
“ Upon the dark-eyed maiden’s tongue
“ Soft-speaking, I enraptured hung ;
“ And my fierce pain was rendered light.
 “ From my bed-side she ne’er would rise
 “ When sleep forsook my aching eyes,
“ But through the weary livelong night
“ Would sit with pity in her breast,
“ And when my pain was stilled to rest
“ She searched for herbs and roots to quiet
“ My fevered blood’s wild anguished riot
“ And oft her glance was on me turned,
 “ And seemed for ever to express
 “ Her pitying love and tenderness,
“ Till all my ardent bosom burned
“ With passion, and it was my lot
“ To love her, though she knew it not.
“ She, pure and innocent, of love
 “ Knew nought, and nought she understood,

"Nor could my words her bosom move.—

"I languished on with fevered blood,

"But soon within her breast love's flame

"A deep consuming glow became,

"And then that blissful moment came,

"From my sick bed I rose at length,

"My force renewed, restored my strength,

"And all my soul enraptured thrilled

"With one absorbing passion filled.

"Not long our secret we concealed,

"But to her parents soon revealed

"Our love, and on our marriage bands

"Received a blessing from their hands.

"Three years of joy with my fond bride—

"Three years like lightning passed away,

"Ne'er was I parted from her side.

"In our small homestead day by day

"Went swiftly by, the steppe's wide plain,

"Where silence held her dreary reign,

"Around us lay ; about our nest

"Our children played, and my calm breast

"In tranquil joy was laid to rest.

"All happiness I knew beside

"My fair Cossáck, my lovely bride ;

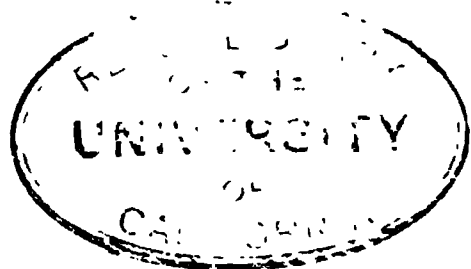
"The grandsire loved us, that stern man

“ The rugged hetman of his clan
“ To his grandchildren gifts supplied,
“ He drew us from our barren home
“ And to Baturin bade us come.

“ Peace reigned ; my wonted life I led
“ On days in tranquil pleasure sped,
“ When fortune came my peace to blast
“ A shadow o’er my joy to cast,
“ Against the Russ Charles struck a blow
“ Then the Ukraine to meet the foe
“ Armed, and prepared with joy for war,
“ But grim Mazeppa’s visage bore
“ The shade of thought and anxious care.

“ Beneath his lowering brow there gleamed
“ His eyes like fiery flame, and ne’er
“ Would he address us, and it seemed
“ As though he cared not when the sound
“ Of troops saluting roared around.

“ In vain we evermore essayed
“ To learn the pain which on him weighed :
“ Mazeppa hid his thoughts from all,
“ And quietly sent forth the call
“ To muster all his band : at last
“ One evening when the day was past



" He summoned me, I came, and he
" Thus spake,—' I long have wished with thee
" ' To talk in freedom, and confide
" ' The secret plans my soul doth bear
" ' Which now I must no longer hide,
" ' But tell me ere I speak, and swear
" ' That thou art ready to give all,
" ' Whate'er may chance, whate'er befall,
" ' For the Ukraine's sake, all : ' he spoke,
" With hasty promise forth I broke,
" ' All sacrifices will I make
" ' For my beloved country's sake,
" ' The wife I love with passion tender,
" ' My children, all will I surrender,
" ' My honour must I keep alone.'
" I ceased, Mazeppa's dark eyes shone
" As glimmers ere the break of day
" The light which drives the shades away,
" And from his stern brow as I spoke
" The clouds of anger parting broke.
" He pressed my hand, and spake again ;
" ' True son art thou of the Ukraine,
" ' Long since a loyal noble mind
" ' In Voinarofskiyi I divined,
" ' Cold hearts I love not, traitors they
" ' Who our lov'd country would betray ;

“ ‘ Foes to our sacred history,
“ ‘ To them their country’s ills can be
“ ‘ No burden, o’er their creeping souls
“ ‘ No noble fire of passion rolls,
“ ‘ From birth their destined course they crawl
“ ‘ To the dark grave which closes all,
“ ‘ *Thou* art not one of that vile band,
“ ‘ But when I say I love my land
“ ‘ Better than thee, thou wilt not deem
“ ‘ That such a word doth not beseem
“ ‘ Thy noble sentiments, for thou, aye thou
“ ‘ Like a young hero said’st e’en now
“ ‘ That children, wife, thyself, all ties
“ ‘ All would’st thou gladly sacrifice ;
“ ‘ For love of that fair land, where erst
“ ‘ Our fathers lived, comes ever first ;
“ ‘ Rightly thou said’st—but I—but I—
“ ‘ Who rescued her in days gone by
“ ‘ From servile chains, I in whose breast
“ ‘ Burns vengeance which can know no rest,
“ ‘ I would to her what most I prize
“ ‘ My honour even sacrifice,
“ ‘ And now my secret to reveal,
“ ‘ For the great Peter I can feel
“ ‘ Respect, but know that I must be
“ ‘ All future time his enemy

“ ‘ Under fate’s hand, full well I know
“ ‘ The step is bold, what may betide
“ ‘ But future fortune can decide,
“ ‘ Success may not attend the blow,
“ ‘ Glory may gild my conquering name,
“ ‘ Or foul disgrace may blast my fame,
“ ‘ But I am firm, though o’er my land
“ ‘ Fate threatening dark disaster stand,
“ ‘ The hour is near, the strife at hand,
“ ‘ On our side freedom’s banners fly
“ ‘ Ranged against ruthless tyranny.’

“ Ah fatal words ! from them I trace
“ All my misfortune, my disgrace.
“ But at the time joy filled my breast
“ Of thee, my well-loved fatherland,
“ The thought of thee alone possessed
“ My heart, and in Mazeppa’s hand
“ I placed myself, unthinking, blind,
“ Dear was my country to my mind,
“ Most dear was she, and hate and war
“ ’Gainst the great Peter fierce I swore ;
“ And yet perchance I erred, a flame
“ Of burning ardour filled my frame,
“ To my blind eyes with fury seared
“ A despot base the Czar appeared,

“ Perchance drawn on by passion’s might
“ I could not judge him as was right,
“ But what his brilliant genius wrought
“ The fruits of tyranny I thought :
“ Alas ! I yield to hostile fate
 “ My cruel destiny I bear,
“ But far from home in exiled state
 “ How can I be in judgment fair ?
“ An ardent spirit in me burned,
“ To serve my native country-land I yearned,
“ I longed for glory in the strife,
“ And now a useless wasted life
“ I linger out on these strange plains
“ Where solitude eternal reigns,
“ Grief like a shadow haunts my way,
“ Mine eyes have lost their gleaming ray ;
“ As ice dissolves in trickling streams
“ Beneath the Spring sun’s burning beams,
“ I fade away, my keen soul must
“ ’Neath drear inaction’s burden rust,
“ How fearful ’tis to feel to see
“ The awful hand of destiny
“ My destiny !—in gloomy woe
“ My life drags out its weary day,
“ I hide the grief I must not show,
“ From my own steppes far far away

“ I see where soon will stand my tomb
“ In the wide desert wrapt in gloom.
“ Why on Poltowa’s day of strife,
 “ When swift I rode my mettled steed,
“ Did cruel Fortune spare my life
 “ When thousands there she left to bleed ?
“ Why did I not with glory die
“ Upon my native plains, or why
“ Could I not e’en inglorious fall ?
“ In this dark realm where night rules all
“ Alas I perish, fate has passed
 “ Her dread decree, my doom is sped,
“ I perish, stranger dust at last
 “ Shall o’er the exile’s eyes be spread.”

PART II.

—◆—
Already clearly shone the dawn
O'er the thick woods the frost was drawn,
Then rose through heaven's thick vapours grey
A blood-red globe, the light of day,
But to the "oort" no bright sun's ray
Could penetrate, a trembling beam

Through the thick branches gliding came,
And scarce could cast a feeble gleam

On the frost-covered window frame.

The new made friends before the glow

Had long been sitting, till the fire
Of the pine logs had smouldered low
And scarce the flickering coals could show.

A blue flame ready to expire ;
All motionless the stranger heard

His host his dark sad story tell,
Sometimes with wrath his heart was stirred
Or from his eyelids tear-drops fell.

The exile thus his tale renewed :

"Hast thou when blows the warm spring air
"The mighty stream of Lena viewed ?
"How loosed from frost the waters tear
"And in their rapid current bear

- " The crumbling banks, and rushing free
" Sweep in wild eddies furiously
" All that opposes to their course ?
" Large blocks of ice with mighty force
" They crush, and with hoarse screaming cries
" The whirling floods like mountains rise,
" The crags they rend with frantic roar
" And hurl them tossing from the shore,
" Across the wide unknowing plains ;
" So we destroyed our servile chains
" When freedom and a chief we saw,
 " We beat opposers to the ground,
" We struggled to defend the law
 " Amid our steppes that know no bound.
" Thirsting for glory's thund'rous sound
 " I never sought to spare my life
" Foes at my hand destruction found
" And when the combat raged around
 " And Russians joined in furious strife,
" The hostile lines I stern confronted,
" Against their ranks my dagger blunted.
- " Mazeppa 'gainst the Northern foe
" In the Ukraine struck many a blow,
" The wide steppe smoked amain with gore
 " Dead bodies rotted on the plain.

“ The dogs and wolves the corpses tore
“ The whole earth the appearance bore
“ Of one vast grave, but all in vain,
“ We failed, o’erpowered by the strength
“ Of Peter’s soul, until at length
“ That day came on of dark defeat,
“ Our country’s ruin was complete,
“ Wrought by our hands, the thunder rolled
“ Which of Poltowa’s battle told,
“ Nor could fierce Charles in that grim fight
“ Resist Great Peter’s whelming might,
“ For the first time in shameful flight
“ Upon the foe he turned his back,
“ Mazeppa followed on his track,
“ We with Mazeppa rode, at last
“ Almost five days and nights had past
“ While we had fled without repose
“ Dreading pursuit from our stern foes :
“ Our steeds o’er-wearied scarce could stir
“ No longer roused them rein or spur,
“ We trembled from the cold which came
“ By night, by day a fierce hot flame
“ Scorched us, we scarce could further ride—
“ We halted once by Dnieper’s tide
“ A moment of repose to gain
“ At dead of midnight, where there stood

“ The shelter of a tiny wood,
“ Around us stretched the wide blue plain
“ Dark clouds o’erspread the faint moon’s beam,
 “ Nought but the river’s roaring sound
“ Lashing the banks with swirling stream
 “ Broke the deep hush which reigned around.
“ Under an oak tree there was spread
“ To be the wearied monarch’s bed
“ A plain horse-cloth, beneath his head
“ A saddle, and in sleep he lay.
“ Soldiers sat round him : far away
“ Before the watch-fire’s sparkling blaze
 “ Sat on the black stump of a tree
“ Mazeppa, and with gloomy gaze
 “ And sullen brow, thus spake to me
“ As to a friend, and all unsought
“ Revealed to me his inmost thought ;

“ ‘ How soon do Fortune’s blessings turn,
 “ ‘ What helpless slaves are we to fate !
“ ‘ In vain our breasts with courage burn
 “ ‘ The battle’s finish doth not wait :
“ ‘ One moment all our plans are made,
“ ‘ The next in utter ruin laid,
“ ‘ Our hapless father-land we see,
“ ‘ Our glory, ease, and liberty
“ ‘ Destroyed and lost eternally.

“ ‘ Shall this my soul humiliate ?
“ ‘ Shall I too be a slave to fate ?
“ ‘ Or shall I ’gainst my fortune fight
“ ‘ As erst I strove ’gainst Peter’s might ?
“ ‘ So, Voinarofskyi, see my case,
“ ‘ Remember, in whatever place
“ ‘ My life drags out, I still shall be
“ ‘ Prepared my country’s cause to aid.
“ ‘ Ready am I, means fail not me,
“ ‘ And now my soul to peace is laid,
“ ‘ Peter and I on either side
“ ‘ Met face to face, we thus abide,
“ ‘ As he so I for glory live
“ ‘ And service to my country give.’

“ He ceased ; a gleam his dark eyes fired
“ His dauntless spirit I admired ;
“ And now the pine-wood flame expired
“ With feeble flicker, in repose
“ The hetman lay, when sudden rose
“ A clamour, prisoners were brought—
“ Cossácks were they,—the chief was sought :
“ He leant his head upon his hand,
“ The grey-haired leader of our band
“ Scarce could his soul its anguish brook,
“ His breast was wrung with secret pain ;

“ But with a stern and haughty look,
 “ ‘ Tell me, what news of the Ukraine ? ’
“ He said, and the Cossák replied ;
 “ ‘ I from Baturin now am come,
“ ‘ The people there bless Peter’s side,
 “ ‘ Along the streets is heard the hum
“ ‘ Of triumph o’er the victory ;
“ ‘ In the Ukraine the people thee,
“ ‘ Mazeppa, curse like some foul Jew,
 “ ‘ Thy palace taken with the sword
 “ ‘ Was handed over to our horde
“ ‘ For rapine and destruction due,
“ ‘ Thy name, which men were wont to view
“ ‘ Once in the rolls of glory borne,
“ ‘ Is now dishonoured and their scorn.’

“ With head upon his breast the while
“ Mazeppa with a bitter smile
“ The captive’s answer silent heard,
 “ He laid himself upon the ground
 “ And o’er his face his mantle wound ;
“ With sympathy and anger stirred
“ Our betman to avenge we burned,
“ And much we marvelled when we learned
“ The tidings of our native land ;
“ All silent stood our little band,

" For he, Mazeppa, with strong ties
" Had bound our hearts, and in our eyes
" Was honoured as our nation's lord ;
" Him as a father we adored,
" Our country loved in him alone ;
 " I know not if he wished to gain
" Over the land a princely throne,
 " Or whether he his loved Ukraine
" Wished to preserve from ill, for he
" Had ever hid his plans from me,
" For though I knew the chieftain's mind
" And had for years his thought divined,
" Still never could I know the whole
" Of the dark purpose of his soul,
 " Reserved was he from earliest youth,
" No, I repeat I cannot say
" What in his mind's abysses lay
 " Or treachery or loyal truth,
" But still I swear it, that had he
" Formed plans against our liberty,
 " Then I, without remorse or ruth,
" I would have slain him as he stood,
" Forgetting all the ties of blood ;
" My love this deed would not have checked
" Of kinship ne'er would I have recked.

" At dawn we started once again

" On our sad march across the plain,
" Each heart felt sad, each breast was pained,
 " On all a burden seemed to weigh,
" When our lov'd country's bounds we gained,
 " And foreign lands before us lay.

" My senses reeled; my mind was wild,
" I wept like some poor simple child.
" Some earth I took, and sobbed a prayer,
" Then tied it to my cross with care,
" Perchance, methought, I ne'er again
" Shall see my dearly-loved Ukraine;
" But with me shall this dust remain
 " Where'er I go, and as I roam
" In foreign lands may cure the pain
 " Of my fond breast recalling home;
 " Ah! true this haunting fear has come,
" For to this hour 'tis fate's decree
" That I again should never see
" The land which was so fair to me.

" Through a bare land where no stream flowed,
" Where scarce a flower the desert showed,
 " Upon the barren steppe with speed
" We fled amain, while round us flew
 " The dust clouds, wearied was each steed,

“ Sore was the flying monarch’s need,
“ Of Swedish troops survived but few,
“ At length we came to Bender’s tower,
“ And rested ’neath the Turkish power ;
“ Then on our hetman soon there came
“ A fearful malady, his frame
“ Ceaselessly shook, a glance like flame
“ Rapid he cast on every side,
“ To me and Orlik loud he cried,
“ Stifled with agony, it seemed
“ That he of Kotchubéa dreamed.
“ ‘ Lo ! there they stand,’ aloud he yelled,
“ His trembling frame wild terror held,
“ ‘ The scaffold ready stands, around
“ ‘ Deep heaving sobs and wails resound,
“ ‘ The torturer waits, his arms prepares,
“ ‘ The axe in his dread hands he bears,
“ ‘ A head has fallen—yonder—see—
“ ‘ Another yet—how fearfully
“ ‘ My eyeballs burn, things rocking go.’
“ He then would rise and wildly throw
“ His arms around me with affright
“ And shriek, ‘ Lo ! Peter meets my sight
“ ‘ His furious curses now I hear
“ ‘ O death ! the temple blazes clear,
“ ‘ The incense mounts, the bishop there

“ ‘ Stands with a gloomy threatening air
“ ‘ And loudly to the thundering quire
“ ‘ Calls on Mazeppa curses dire,
“ ‘ For ever cursed be he who planned,
“ ‘ Destruction for his native land ! ’

“ Then motionless he trembling lay
 “ And oft-times in the dead of night
 “ There rose before his frenzied sight
“ The phantoms of a bye-gone day
“ And Kotchubéa’s martyred bride
“ And daughter stood at his bedside,
“ Then yielding to his frantic fear
“ He loudly yelled a hasty prayer
“ And sobbed and wept, and quickly cast
 “ A sullen glance on all around,
“ Then laughed, his melancholy past,
 “ A frantic laugh of maniac sound,
“ Then would again the present be
“ Brought to his dreaming memory,
“ And sorrow to his face would rise
“ While on us sad he fixed his eyes.

“ The ninth eve came, Mazeppa grew
“ Weaker and weaker ; scarce he drew
“ Worn out with pain his feeble breath ;

" It seemed as though he longed for death
 " To end his wearing agony.
" I went to him, his hand I took,
" Ah me ! all life and blood forsook
 " The hand that hung so heavily ;
" His eyes in nearing death were glazed,
 " The damp sweat stood upon his brow,
 " We thought that life had fled e'en now,
" But no : with pain his form he raised
 " Upon the bed, and all his might
 " Collecting, with a fiery light
" In his keen eyes on us he gazed—
" ' O Peter, O my fatherland ! '
 " Thus forth his wailing cry he sent,
 " Then died his voice, his head was bent ;
 " He fell once more, his force was spent
" On me alone of all the band
" His look he fixed with glazed eye,
" And gently breathed his last-drawn sigh.
" No tear I shed, like marble cold
" No thought my chilled heart seemed to hold.
" I stood Mazeppa's corpse before,
" Half killed with grief and anguish sore,
" Memory and sense were mine no more.

" The mournful funeral was sped,
 " Charles sunk in darkest depth of gloom,

" His Swedish warriors sadly led
 " To the Ukraine's great chieftain's tomb.
" Cossácks and Swedes alike bewept
" His loss, like some faint shade I crept
" Despairing 'mid my friends, for we
 " All deemed that with Mazeppa dead
" Our hopes our native land to see
 " Restored to freedom, all had fled.
" Ah me ! the last sad rites I paid,
" When suddenly on me there weighed
" A dire disease, and I was laid
" Hard by death's door, a dying man,
 " But burned again my life's bright flame,
 " Again renewed my forces came,
" Again my martyrdom began.

" Bender seemed hateful to me then,
" I fled and left my countrymen,
" In foreign lands to find relief
" I roamed, and sought to banish grief,
" But ah ! in vain, like spirit sent
" To haunt me with some dire intent
" Relentless fate where'er I went
 " Pursued me,—I was captive ta'en
 " By hostile bands, and to this plain

“ What gloom and desolation reign
“ Conveyed in endless banishment.

“ In this bleak land in exile drear
“ Passed o’er my head full many a year ;
“ Safety and hope appeared to be
“ All that religion was to me.
“ I grew accustomed to my lot,
“ Hid from my foes in this wild spot ;
“ At times I mourned with bitter pain
“ O’er my last kin, and the Ukraine,
“ What was my native country’s state ?
“ What Peter’s ? Had they found their fate
“ To them a kindly friend or foe ?
“ Did my bride’s tears for me still flow ?
“ Should I e’er see my friends again ?
 “ Such doubts destroyed my bosom’s rest
“ In my exile with thoughts of pain,
 “ A vague grief harassed all my breast,
“ From the unfriendly town I fled
“ And restless to the waste I sped,
“ In all my grief, in all my woe
 “ The roaring storms, the billows dashing,
 “ The winds through gloomy forests crashing
“ Some solace to my mind could show,

" The elements' wild warfare stilled
" The turmoil which my bosom filled,
" It poured fresh strength into my heart
" My soul with anguish ceased to smart.

" By the Yakutskian ' oort ' alone
 " Full oft I stood 'neath tall pine trees
" I heard the ' booran ' 'round me moan
 " I felt the cruel frost-grip seize
" All nature, while the forests wild
" And rocks in endless chain defiled
" Before me, scarce the eye could mark
 " The bound betwixt the snowy plain
 " Which lay vast-spreading like the main
" And heaven's extended cloud-vault dark
" The curled ' talneek ' * beneath the snow
" Spread itself on the mountain side
" Where stood a holt, while Lena's tide
" Did in majestic grandeur flow.
" Sudden a woman's form I see
 " Her dress is poor, she scarce can bear
 " Her load of wood, with grief and care
" Dying she almost seems to be,
" Towards her I run, ah why ? I trace
 " In her through all her depth of woe,
 " Through frosts that chill, and storms that blow,

- “ My young Cossák, my sweet bride’s face,
“ My dear companion’s lovely grace :
“ She knew of my unhappy state,
 “ And from her native land she went
 “ To seek me in my banishment,
“ It grieved her not to share my fate :
“ She met ere yet her way was done
“ Of famous martyrs many a one,
“ But me she could not find, for here
“ An exile in this country drear
“ Is but a number half-forgot.
 “ The law forbade to speak my name.
“ The governor e’en knew it not ;
 “ From me to learn it none dared claim
“ In Yakutsk, so my faithful bride
“ Was doomed by fate’s behest unkind
 “ Searching to wander far and wide,
 “ And her deep anguish aye to hide,
“ Within her strong and noble mind.
- “ Ah ! how to tell thee, stranger guest,
 “ Of the deep sense of heart-felt gladness,
 “ Yet strangely intermixed with sadness,
“ Which filled my ever-labouring breast,
“ When my fair bride in this far land
“ I met upon this barren strand;

“ With her again I seemed to live.

“ The children were not sent to me,
“ That boon our Maker did not give :
“ He willed not that they should see
“ Their parents’ hopeless misery :
“ Theirs was a happy doom which slew
“ The land of exile ne’er they knew.

“ Peace came again, while by my side
“ Abode my faithful darling bride ;
“ My fate seemed milder, sorrow’s smart
“ More rarely tore my suffering heart.
“ But ah ! not long this joy could last,
“ But like a dream it came and past,
“ For long my dear companion’s breast
“ By wearing pain had been possessed,
“ As spring came on ’twas plain to see
“ That it would be her mournful doom
“ To sink into an early tomb,
“ And then my Maker gave to me
“ To know how sweet, how good was she,
“ My suffering bride ! worn out and ill
“ She strove to hide her anguish still,
“ A smiling face she oft would show
“ With jest : of days past long ago,
“ Of her great uncle fallen low,

" And of her children oft would speak,
 " It seemed her life had quite returned
 " When lively thoughts within her burned.
" But solitude she oft would seek
" Unknown to me, and tears would shed ;
 " In vain I sent my prayers to heaven
 " That life and vigour might be given
" Back to my bride, but fate was sped,
" And none can change her purpose dread ;
" The fatal hour came on ; one day
" She said : ' My love, I pass away,
" ' Be calm, in this our world below
" ' We have endured long-lasting woe,
" ' But still there is a better land,
" ' Where thou wilt go as is most meet
" ' Where we each other soon shall greet
" ' Such meed awaits the martyr's band
" ' In that bright world no exiled state
" ' Our loving hearts can separate.'
" She ceased, and suddenly the light
" Of her sweet eyes went out in night,
" More heavily her breath she drew,
" Bright with a smile her calm face grew.
" And then she faded in her prime
" Like flower cut off before its time
" In cold Siberia's desert wide,

" Like some poor hot-house blossom dried
" By stifling heat, bemoaned she died.

" Over the grave where she lies low
" I built a mound, there oft I go
" At set of sun, and on her tomb
" Musing I sit in silent gloom,
" Of days gone by I sadly dream,
 " Like some strange vision gone before
" My friends, and great Mazeppa seem
 " To stand around me as of yore ;
" I feel the madness of the strife,
" And once again returns to life
" My pure-souled bride, my long-lost wife.
" O stranger ! when on her I muse
" I feel the soothing thought infuse
" Fresh courage to meet death with scorn,
" While o'er my loss I gently mourn.

" I often think how in the tomb
" Is hid her beauty's tender bloom :
" Her ardent soul, her noble mind,
" Within the grave's cold bounds confined.
" How nobly had she thought and planned
" How had she loved her father-land !
" And in her exile drear what fire

"Thoughts of her country could inspire
"When of her native land she spoke !
"Of sadness dark a secret stroke
"Crushed her, with grief her heart was torn
"For that fair land where she was born ;
"The Muscovite ne'er marked her woe,
"For e'en by chance she ne'er would show
"To gladden the relentless foe.
"Her grief by any sighs she drew
"Or tears she dropped ; but well she knew
"The duties which the state required,
"And what to her own home were due,
"And thus her noble soul inspired
"With ardent passion for the right
"Preserved her in her woes in spite
"Of harassing fate's despotic might

* * * * *

"I lost her, and my wearied heart
"With anguish racked, and sorrow's stress
"Had lost all faith in happiness.
"For I had suffered from the smart
"Of countless ills, but ne'er did I
"Like some base coward seek to fly
"From grief by placing to my life
"A self-made limit, yet in strife

“ I oft upon my native plain
“ Upon the steppes of the Ukraine
“ Death in his many shapes had met,
 “ And never yet my look had blanched
“ Ne’er had my bosom trembled yet
“ An instant ne’er did I forget
 “ As ’gainst the foe my band I launched
“ That I to my great chief had been
“ Bound both by friendship and by kin,
“ From early childhood was I wont
“ The noble Brutus to account
“ A hero, and to venerate
“ The saviour of the Roman state,
“ The man in deeds so truly great,
 “ In princely soul so truly free ;
“ And yet he earns the meed of blame
 “ And to his countryman was he
“ A curse, and tarnished was his fame,
“ For from his suicide there came
“ Fresh force to his foes’ victory ;
“ Thou seest all my suffering
 “ My exiled life, in wretched wise,
“ Its course of sorrow lingering,
“ How death to me would comfort bring,
“ But life and death do I despise
 “ And live I must, for all my breast

“ With patriotism’s glow possessed
“ Still fondly dreams that there may be
“ A time when joy and liberty,
“ The heritage our fathers gave,
“ Our native land again may bless,
“ And then some patriot may save
“ His countrymen from wretchedness.”

He ceased, and from his pallid face,
Of gloom had vanished every trace,
Tears filled his eyes, a prayer he muttered
With whispering softness gently uttered ;
His guest divined with tender thought
For what in prayer the martyr sought,
Tears down his cheek unbidden ran
And to the suffering martyred man
His hand he gave ; the exile’s woe
O’er Müller’s breast shed deepest gloom,
His friendship thus he sought to show,
A friendship lasting to the tomb.

With lightning speed the days flew by,
And now returning o’er the land
Grim winter with his chilling hand
Over all nature made to lie
His white-spread fall of dreary snow.

Oft would the learned Müller go
The exiled sufferer to see,
His grief to share, and oft-times he
Like one in that fair country born
O'er the Ukraine with him would mourn.

One day his exile-friend he sought
To his lone home in haste he brought
The news of pardon, all around
The crackling frost had gripped the ground,
The reindeer all the gloomy way
With dart-like swiftness dragged his sleigh,
With eager glance he saw the wood
Of the half-ruined palisade
Which round the exile's cottage stood,
Appearing through the thick boughs' shade
As through the waste his way he made.

'With what sweet rapture to my friend,'
He thought, 'shall I announce the end
'Of all the sufferings of his lot,
'And bid him leave this dreary spot
'Of exile, and in freedom fly
'To his own country, then will I
'Remind him that in that far land

‘ His countrymen impatient stand
‘ Their blessings on his head to call
‘ And there too is the loving band
‘ Of friends, and there the peaceful hall
‘ Of his beloved ancestral home.’

Müller with such sweet thoughts beguiled
The dreary road, and now had come
To the poor cottage in the wild ;
The exile’s hut he gained with haste,

But none came forth to meet him there
As onwards through the doors he paced ;

With light obscured a sunbeam fair
Pierced through the ice with snow encased,
But all was void, no answer brought
His echoing footsteps, there was naught
But cold and gloom, and Müller sought
His friend in vain, ‘ the house is bare ’
He marvelled to himself, ‘ but where,
Where is the exile hidden ? ’ so

His soul weighed down with secret gloom
And terror, he resolved to go

Forth to the neighbouring mound-like tomb,
What sight there met him as he went ?

Under the cross which o’er him leant

His head upon his bosom bent,
Like some sepulchral monument
Upon the mound which he had raised,
The exile sat, mute, gloomy, still,
Numbed with the grim frost's fatal chill,
His eyes were motionless and glazed
His icy brow like marble white
Shone coldly, and the snow-flakes light
Up from the neighbouring valley whirled,
And o'er his corpse in thick wreaths curled,
And shrouded half his form from sight.

Vadeem.⁹



I.

Above the torrent's boiling stream
His sad glance on Novgórod bent,
Sate motionless and mute Vadeem
And on his arm his head he leant.

Like fiery serpents through the sky
The lightning cut, the thunder growled,
The torrent threw its foam on high
Against the bank, and hoarsely howled.
The heavens were dressed in starry sheen,
Like some rich coronet enflowered,
As in a shroud the moon was seen
Wandering across the clouds which lowered.

Like some strong rock the sea waves spurning
Like ice of the eternal night,
Is the bold warrior ever burning
His country to defend in fight.

And nought the fiery-souled Vadeem
Recked of the fatal icy chills,
His mind was purposed to redeem
By force his countrymen from ills.

“What foul disgrace on us attends!”

He cried, “what shame our foes prepare!

“A despot Scandinavia sends

“Over free Slavs his rule to bear.

* * * * *

Svyatoslav.¹⁰

IV.

At times obscured, athwart the sky
The two-horned moon with pallid beam
Wandered in lonely majesty
Through the dark clouds o'er Danube's stream ;
She shone with pearl-like ray serene
Over the camp in slumber lapped,
O'er swords' and lances' burnished sheen,
And warriors' ranks in deep sleep wrapped.

On a high mound of tombs apart
A young Hussar his watch was keeping,
A warrior he of gallant heart—
While far away the host lay sleeping,
Before him on the island stood
The Turkish tents of gleaming white,
Their standards waved like some dense wood
And rustled in the breezes light.

Over past times the warrior's thought
Sped swiftly, there, by Danube's tide
He mused o'er all the battles fought,
All the loud strifes, and thus he cried ;
" 'Twas on these plains, this very ground
While clouds of hostile arrows flew,

“ That great Svyatoslav was crowned

“ With glory to his courage due.

“ His hand the sign for fight would show

“ The fearless Russ with vengeance burned

“ And on the ranks of our fierce foe

“ Rushed, and with glory aye returned.

“ On these far steppes he sought for fame,

“ Nor feared the horrors of the strife,

“ Till all men marvelled at his name

“ The gloomy harshness of his life.

“ O'er him as roof the heaven was spread

“ In winter's cold, and summer's heat,

“ A saddle cloth his only bed,

“ And hard horseflesh his only meat ;

“ ‘ No recreant flight our lives can save ! ’

“ He thundered on the battle plain,

“ ‘ No shame can haunt the hero's grave,

“ ‘ And fight we must, escape is vain !

“ ‘ So strive like heroes, let no shame

“ ‘ Our country's glory e'er disgrace,

“ ‘ Let heaps of hostile bones proclaim,

“ ‘ Honour to our last resting place.’

“ The tiny band their chief's voice heard,

“ Boldly they rushed on troops of foes,

“ With fear the Greeks’ chilled blood was stirred,
“ Their hair on end with terror rose.

“ From morning till the evening shade
“ The battle raged upon the plain,
“ Twelve times the hero chief essayed
“ The crown of victory to gain ;
“ The corpses fell in heaps around,
“ At times the foemen shunned the fight,
“ No refuge from defeat they found
“ Crushed by our valiant chieftain’s might.

“ Their bucklers on their shoulders cast,
“ The Slavs like lions seeking prey,
“ From the high mountain threatening passed,
“ Again to join the bloody fray ;
“ Byzantium’s haughty monarch viewed
“ With stern surprise his dauntless foes,
“ Constrained at length in friendly mood
“ A truce and meeting to propose.

“ The chieftain of the Northern race
“ With royal Czargrad’s powers combined
“ Hard by Doróstol chose the place
“ Where the long-wished-for peace was signed.
“ Thine ashes, and thy frame are lost,
“ O Prince, but thy great soul still lives,

“ And kindling ardour in our host,
“ Wings to our high-souled courage gives.

“ Thy soul was like some eagle ranging,
“ When burns the furious rage for fight
“ The simple soldier’s courage changing
“ Into a grand heroic might ! ”

But lo the dawn ! the night has sped
The cannon gives the sign for war
And o’er the Danube’s banks are spread
The legions of the great white Czar.

“ List to the trumpet’s roaring call
“ To the grim feast of blood inviting,
“ There, there my steed, we soon may fall,
“ Where clash the broadswords, bravely fighting.”
He spoke and charged, the cannon crashed,
The whistling grape-shot havoc wrought,
And fiercely through the ranks he dashed
And foes in deadly combat sought.

Reddened with gore the river ran,
Brave Weissman shared a glorious fate,
Our brave troops on the Mussuiman
Wreaked slaughter, their revenge to sate,
The field was piled with slain ; in flight
Our foemen turned ; our flag we set
Where long ago in thundering fight
The Greeks our brave forefathers met.

Svyatopolk.



V.

In wild Bohemia's forests drear
Where ne'er was heard the voice of man,
Where no bold stranger e'er drew near
With curious glance the wild to scan,
Where but the savage grey wolf's view
The wild-boar meets with bristling crest,
Svyatopolk the wretch who slew
His brothers, roamed in dire unrest.

The eyes of men he ne'er could meet,
A stern rebuke dwelt in them still,
While seemed the echoes to repeat
"Thou villain!" from each answering hill,
"Thou villain!" all the forest glades
Re-echoed with a piercing cry,
While round his murdered brothers' shades
With threatening gestures seemed to fly.

From dale to dale in desperate wrath
From glade to glade he madly fled,
But Heaven's stern anger crossed his path,
Then came the end, his doom was sped ;

None let the pitying tear drop fall
O'er him, the heaven's abhorred foe,
A curse 'twere meet on him to call
Who laid his holy brother low.

His tomb a passing peasant spied,
And struck with terror at the sight,
He turned in hasty flight aside,
And crossed himself three times with fright :
The traitorous deeds accomplished then
In times long past to us are known,
And still Svyatopolk 'mongst men
The name of "wretch" doth ever own.

E'en now the tale which dread inspires,
The frightful deed he wrought of old,
To awe-struck children by their sires
In our home-circles still is told.
It is a fearful thing, they say,
To be a slave to passion's force,
Such men fall headlong, and each day
Crime follows crime in hastening course.

Ivan Soosaneen."

XVIII.

"Where lead'st thou our footsteps? here nought can be seen,"

Thus shouted the foe to the brave Soosaneen,

"We sink in the snow-heaps, we stick on the road,

"We ne'er shall arrive at thy sheltering abode,

"'Tis on purpose thou stray'st from the path, but in vain,

"From tricks like these Michael no safety will gain.

"Though snow-storms may rage, though we wander afar,

"Yet death at the Poles' hands shall come on thy Czar,

"So lead on, or tremble! and shorten our pain,

"All night with the tempest contending amain,

"Through snow-storms and cold thou hast made us to go—

"But what dark spot is that in the valley below?"

"'Tis the hamlet," the peasant replied, "see, there stand

"The corn-yards, the bridge, and the pales round the land,

"With me on to the door, for the cottage hath been

"Long time ready warmed to receive guests within,

"So onward, and fear not." "Well, well I must say

"Thou hast led us, my friend, a most cursed long way.

“ A night more infernal I never have seen,
“ With snow stuck together my eyelids have been,
“ My coat, pah ! you wring it, there’s not a thread dry.”
Thus grumbled the Pole, and went in with the cry
Of, “ Wine, wine ! we are cold, we are wet through and
through
“ Or we’ll take what our broadswords can wring out of
you.”

And now on the board the rough napkin was spread
With beer and with wine-jugs, and each had his bread
Before him, and soup made of cabbage was there,
And Russian wheat-gruel, a right welcome fare,
Without the cold wind at the casemates was spurning,
Within the dim spluttering torches were burning.

Now midnight had passed, in tranquillity deep
On the benches the Poles lay unheeding asleep,
In the house filled with smoke no one stirring was seen,
Save as sentinel standing the grey Soosaneen,
In the corner he stood near the “ icon,” and there
For the young Czar’s protection he murmured a prayer.

The silence the tramp of a horse’s hoofs stirred,
Then stole Soosaneen to the doorway, and heard,
“ Is it thou, father dear ? to find thee I am here.”
“ Where goest thou ? rough is the journey and drear,

" 'Tis past midnight, no lull in the tempest hath come,
" Sure thou bringest distress to the hearts of thy home."

" It was God's will thy steps to this village to guide
" And now haste to the young Czar," the father replied,
" And tell him, tell Michael, to flee and not wait,
" For the murderous Poles in their pride and their hate
" In secret to murder young Michael intend,
" And so doth a fresh woe o'er Moscow impend.

" Tell him that I, loving my faith and my land,
" Will rescue the Czar from the enemy's hand ;
" Tell him that his safety lies only in flight,
" That e'en now the assassins are with me this night."
" Oh my father, what say'st thou ? a moment refrain,"
Said the youth, " if thou die, what to me will remain."

" Who then my young sister, my mother will guard ? "
" The holy Creator will take them in ward "
Said brave Soosaneen, " and they never will fall,
" For assistance and shelter He giveth to all
" Who are orphans ; so hasten, 'tis time now to go
" 'Tis for Russia, remember, I lay my life low."

With a sob the youth mounted, and swiftly did go
Like a whistling arrow just loosed from the bow,

Through the clouds the moon shone, the wild snow-storm
was o'er,
All hushed were the winds, and the tempest's loud roar,
In the east the dim dawn 'gan to glimmer afar,
And the Poles woke from slumber, those foes of the Czar.

"Soosaneen," they cried out, "cease thy prayers to thy
God,

"It is time for the start, we should be on the road."

So leaving the village in shouting array,
Through the forest they followed a winding pathway,
Soosaneen led them on; and now up rose the light,
And the sun through the branches began to gleam bright.

Soon his rays were obscured, then again brightly shone,
Then with dim light he glimmered, and vanished anon,
Scarce a rustle was heard from the beech or the oak,
Scarce a sound 'neath the feet from the frost-bound snow
broke,

Scarce a crow rose in flight with a flutter and cry,
And the woodpecker pecked at the willow-tree dry.

In silence the Poles marched on singly in file,
Still further their grey-haired guide led them the while,
Now high in the heavens the mid-day sun stood,
But darker and drearier grew the thick wood,

'Till sudden before them the pathway was lost,
And a hedge of fir-branches thick plaited and crossed
With pine-boughs right down to the ground inter-
laced,
On the road like some rough wall before them was
placed ;
In vain did the scouts bend a listening ear,
All was desert and dead, not a sound could they hear,
“ Whither now hast thou led us ? ” the wearied Poles
cried,
“ To the place that was needed,” the peasant replied ;
“ So slay me, a martyr, for here is my tomb,
“ But know that I save the young Czar from his doom ;
“ Ye thought ye had found a base traitor in me
“ But no Russ is a traitor, nor ever shall be !
“ Here each loves his country from youth’s early day,
“ And his fatherland vilely can never betray.”
“ Wretch ! ” yelled the fierce Poles with a wild fury torn,
“ Thou shalt die ’neath our sabres.” “ Your anger I
scorn,
“ For the true Russian heart with content and with
trust
“ Ever joyfully dies in the cause which is just ;
“ Fear of death or of doom from my spirit is far,
“ All untrembling I die for my country and Czar.”

"Die then!" to the hero the angry foe screamed,
O'er his grey head the broadswords keen-whistling
gleamed,

"Perish, traitorous villain, thy life's end is near,"
Soosaneen wounded fell without shrinking or fear,
By his purer blood's red stream the pure snow was
laved,

'Twas that life-blood which Michael for Russia had
saved.

Czarevich Alexis at Rordestven.



XXIII.

Through valleys sweeps the whistling wind,
And through the forest's roaring trees,
The pale moon hidden from behind
The clouds looks down on Oredeeze.

There houses scattered far and wide
Deep sunk in misery stand around,
While here 'mid beauty on this side
Is placed the village burial ground,
With wooden cross which marks its bound,
While 'neath the cover of the hill
There runs a clear pellucid rill,
Which through the wild wood takes its course
And tears its banks with crumbling force.

A priest and one who with affright
Gazes around him, on a tree
Sit deep in converse, who is he
Who holds discourse at dead of night?

"Ready, thou holy man, am I
"But — but — my father — ah 'tis he —"
The old man hastened to reply,
"In thought he sins most wilfully,

“ His hand the church hath rent and torn,

“ The sight afar my dread inspires,

“ See now, all things he treats with scorn,

“ The rights and customs of our sires,

“ This sacred country, our birthplace,

“ And Moscow, cradle of our race.

“ Our true faith's safety can be won

“ Young royal hero, but by thee,

“ And dost thou not to urge thee on

“ Thy mother's bright example see ?

“ For God the Empress gave up all,

“ And no remorse her bosom stirred,

“ But to a gleaming palace hall

“ A dark and narrow cell preferred,

“ To heaven or hell now choose thy road,

“ My son, such words thy thought require

“ And for thy sire forget thy God

“ Or for thy God forget thy sire.”

He ceased ; the young prince from the tree

Up sprang, and spake, “ so let it be !

“ I gather thunderbolts of war

“ Against my father and the Czar.”

FRAGMENTS OF THE UNFINISHED POEM
NALEVAIKO.¹³



I.

Kiëff.

Low humbled on the dusty ground,
Her once imperial brow discrowned,
A prey to Polish warriors bold,
O'er Kiëff years revolving rolled.
All things must pass, all things must change,
But memory o'er the past may range,
And see proud Kiëff brightly gleam
From the high banks o'er Dnieper's stream ;
For erst from far lands strangers came
Attracted by her beauty's fame,
Wealth, Eastern luxury, all were there,
Trade from all parts — a nation's fair,—
Strange tongues resounded, here the gold
Which came from Stamboul's mart was sold
Along the streets, and where the breeze
Rustled amid the gardens' trees

Palace-like mansions proudly rose,
While round to guard the land from foes
Strong bands of horsemen, lancers brave,
To Kiëff's walls protection gave.
She smiled, invincible in might,
No fierce assault her soul could fright.
Within the walls the eye might view
Pecherskoi's convent, white in hue,
A miracle to nation's eyes,
Of beauty and of wondrous size,
Whose walls reached towering to the sky,
Scarce holy prayers could soar as high.
But ah ! long since has past away
The glory of a bye-gone day.
Shame, shame that such a fate was borne,
That Russia ruined, rent, and torn,
By the fierce quarrels of her lords,
Should fall a prey to foreign hordes.
Kiëff's gold gates, her mansions proud,
Her children, and the countless crowd,
Of men who in fair Kiëff dwelt,
Fierce Battia's¹⁴ ruthless vengeance felt,
But Gelimin at last arose,
The blow was struck 'gainst Russia's foes,
The Tartar Empire past away,
And came again a joyful day

With songs of freedom, while around
The nations humbled to the ground,
From death-like torpor rose again ;
But Kiëff—city of the plain
And barren steppe—the world no more
Could view with rapture as before,
But bowed by fate's relentless stroke
Beneath the hated Polish yoke,
She stood, like some sepulchral tomb,
Built o'er a ruined people's doom.

II.

The Death of the Bailiff of Chigirin.*

Swift o'er the steppe with headlong speed
Stern Nalevaiko urged his steed,
A massy lance in rest he bore,
A dagger at his waist he wore,
And whip, while round his shoulders slung
A trusty arquebuse was hung :
As whirlwind sweeps across the sea,
His coal-black courser gallantly,
Untiring o'er the boundless plain,
Galopped with streaming tail and mane ;
Stirred by his hoofs the dust-clouds whirled,
And o'er his track in thick wreaths curled.
The warrior raised himself on high,
A piercing glance afar he threw
Some distant foeman to descry
Through the dim mist of heaven's blue.
One look enough,—dark passion stirred
His gleaming eyes, his steed he spurred,
And strove with hand and voice to cheer,
And urged him on in swift career.
'Twas but a dark speck in the haze

* A District of Kiëff.

Which met stern Nalevaiko's gaze,
Scarce seen, but soon apace it grew
Each moment larger to the view ;
At last across the steppe which lay,
Barren 'mid shades of sombre gray,
There gleamed upon his eager glance
A Polish Knight with glittering lance,
A beauteous youth -to greater speed
The fierce Cossák impelled his steed,
With cruel joy his dark eyes flashed
As forward furiously he dashed,
Soon he o'ertook the flying foe,
And reached him with a deadly blow.
Pierced with the lance's well-aimed thrust,
The Pole rolled headlong in the dust,
But falling 'ere he reached the ground,
His foot was caught, with one wild bound
His courser started with affright,
And galloped free in rapid flight,
Dragging his rider, wild with fear
Naught heeding in his mad career.

Swift like a vulture on his track,
There followed on the fierce Cossák,
His jaded steed he urged amain
With bloody spur and loosened rein,

No pause or rest a moment made,
His ruthless course no pity stayed ;
The Pole meanwhile his foot to free
Struggled in helpless agony.
On, on the frenzied courser flew,
His fallen rider gasping drew
Smothered with gory dust beneath,
The clattering hoofs his dying breath,
While far drawn out an' ensanguined stain
Marked his dread passage o'er the plain.

III.

Nalevaiko's Confession.

Say not, thou holy man, again
That this is sin, thy words are vain,
Be it a fearful mortal sin
Worse than all crimes that e'er have been,
I care not—for could I but see
My native land at liberty,
Could I but see my race restored
To freedom from the foreign horde,
All sins would I upon me take
Without one sigh for Russia's sake.—
The crimes of all the Tartar race,
The apostate Uniates'¹⁵ treason base,
The sins of every Jew and Pole—
All would I take upon my soul.
Try not with threats my mind to shake,
Persuasive words no change can make,
For hell to me is to have viewed
My loved Ukraine in servitude ;
To see my fatherland set free,
This, this alone, is heaven for me !

E'en from the cradle was my breast
With love of liberty possessed,
My mother sang me glorious lays

Of those long-past historic days,
Whose memory yet lives 'mongst men,
For no fear seized on Russians then,
None cringed before the haughty Pole,
The iron of a foreign yoke
Weighed upon no free Russian's soul,
None cowered beneath a stranger's stroke ;
Cossácks were then the Pole's allies,
Bound each to each in equal ties,
Such as free men would well beseem—
Now all is vanished like a dream.
Cossácks long since had learned to know
How into tyrants friends may grow ;
The Lithuanian, and the Jew,
The Pole, and all the Uniate crew,
Like ravening crows around their prey
Seize us, and tear our limbs away,
The voice of law no more is heard
In Warsaw's city, none are stirred
At hearing all a nation's wail,
Our mourning voices nought avail.
And now within me burns a flame —
Of hatred for the Polish name,
A fierce hot flame of raging fire
My look is wild with passion dire
And frenzied wrath ; the soul in me

Sickens for love of liberty.

One thought have I by night and day,
Which like a shadow haunts my way,
E'en where the steppes lie silent, bare,
Unresting it pursues me there ;
E'en in the soldier's camp, and when
The battle's whirl, and tramp of men,
Around me roar with maddening rush,
I hear it still, and in the hush
Of the still church's vaulted gloom,
Sound in my ears the words of doom
" 'Tis time," the holy accents say,
" 'Tis time to sweep the foes away,
" O'er the Ukraine who bear their sway."
I know full well the direful fate
Which must upon the patriot wait
Who first dares rise against the foe
And at the tyrant aim the blow.
This is my destined fate—but say
When, when has freedom won her way
Without the blood of martyrs shed,
When none for liberty have bled ?
My coming doom I feel and know
And bless the stroke which lays me low,
And, father, now with joy I meet
My death, to me such end is sweet.

STANZAS.



The prophecies once said of me
In youth, their falsehood now have shown,
It is my bitter destiny
To be 'mid throngs of men alone.

Too soon some dark mysterious fate
A shadow on my young life turned
My strivings all to dissipate,
Too soon alas ! men's hearts I learned.

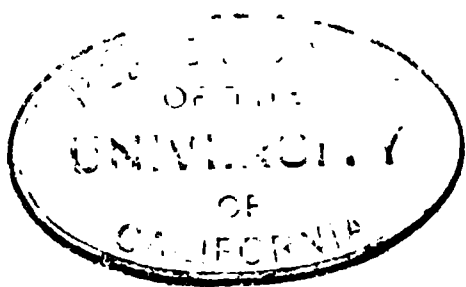
'Tis sad to know of nought but tears,
A stranger 'midst my kin to be,
But 'tis more dread in youthful years
To know truth's grim reality.

In heavy grief and settled gloom
Wandering, till now alone I go,
The world becomes a dreary tomb,
This world of grief and hopeless woe.

No solace comes from any meeting,
Such ease to win in vain I try,
A cold corpse gives the only greeting,
Or some poor child's unthinking cry.

On the Death of his Son.

Brief sojourner upon this earth,
Beauty soon lost to earthly eyes,
My infant, when we hailed thy birth,
Why didst thou flee and seek the skies?
Why 'neath dark fate's relentless blow,
Angel of purest beauty born,
In grief that solace ne'er can know
Hast thou thy parents left to mourn?



NOTES.

¹ The hero of this poem was a real historical personage, though the actual facts of his life differ considerably from the story told by Reliaieff. He was the son of Mazeppa's sister, and that Hetman, being childless, adopted him, and sent him to Germany to be educated. In 1707, after a brief residence at the court of the Czar, Mazeppa sent him with a detachment of 5,000 men to join Menschikoff's force. He was sent again to that general, when Charles XII resolved on the invasion of the Ukraine, to endeavour to blind him to Mazeppa's real designs. This mission was not altogether successful; but Mazeppa shortly afterwards threw off the mask of loyalty, and joined Charles XII. From this time Voinarofskyi's fortunes were inseparably bound up with those of that unfortunate monarch, who gave him several important commands and the rank of colonel, and on the death of Mazeppa, named him Hetman of the Dnieper. After the battle of Pultowa, and the ruin of his patron's cause, Voinarofskyi lived abroad in great state, having inherited a considerable sum in money and jewels from Mazeppa. His shrewdness and wealth ensured his reception into the brilliant circle of the German courts, and his friendship with that very doubtful character, the celebrated Countess Konigsmark, mother of Maurice de Saxe, and mistress of King August, earned him some notoriety. But his evil destiny pursued him. He was on the point of embarking at Hamburgh for Sweden to recover a debt due to him and Mazeppa from the king, when he was arrested at the request of the Russian Resident. The Court of Vienna not unnaturally protested against this glaring breach of international right; but while the question was pending, Voinarofskyi conceived the idea of throwing himself rashly on the generosity of the Czar. He presented himself to Peter on the Empress' name-day, and at her intercession, banishment was substituted for immediate execution. He was sent to Yakutsk, where Müller saw him in 1736; he found the thin veneer of European civilization entirely worn off him, and the dandy of the Viennese court had relapsed into his aboriginal savagery. He died in Siberia, but the manner and date of his death are unknown.

Voinarofskyi would seem hardly adapted to be the hero of a poem, and indeed, Relaiëff has been obliged to deviate widely from his real history in order to make him sentimentally interesting; when the poet describes him as mourning for his Cossack bride, he was really engaged in a by no means Platonic flirtation with a notorious beauty of the time, and his burning patriotism so graphically dwelt upon in the poem showed itself principally in his life by his perfect readiness to sell the title of "Hetman" to the highest bidder. The noble grey-haired exile, whose European civilization stands out in strong contrast to his savage surroundings, really was a simple barbarian who found it easy to relapse into his primitive state of nature. However, in some respects, Voinarofskyi is an interesting figure, as typical—though the type cannot be said to be a very elevated one—of the upper class of Russians of that day. He must also have been a man of considerable determination and power, or Peter the Great would not, as Bestonjeff has pointed out, have paid him the compliment of considering him a dangerous foe. Fortunately, the charm of a poem does not necessarily depend on its strict historical accuracy.

² "Oort" a Siberian word signifying a small habitation, either temporary or permanent. Oorts are constructed of bark or wood, and sometimes leather or felt, and are occasionally made so as to be removable from place to place.

³ Lake Baikal, a large lake in the south of Eastern Siberia.

⁴ Müller was one of those learned foreigners introduced by Peter the Great to bring culture into his dominions. He founded the Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg, and established the first journal. His meeting with Voinarofskyi in the wilds of Siberia is an historical fact.

⁵ Ermak or Jermak was one of the Hetmans of the Cossacks of the Don, distinguished by his daring brigandage. Ivan the Terrible partly destroyed his band, but with a few followers, and some guides which he obtained from the Strogonoff family of Orel, he started for Siberia, which country he explored and conquered. He sagaciously did homage to the Czar for this new territory, his former acts of brigandage were pardoned, and he was laden with honours by the Russian monarch. Almost contemporaneous with Cortez and Pizarro, Ermak resembled the Spanish adventurers in his dauntless ferocity, and the extraordinary rapidity with which he, with a mere handful of men, overran and conquered an enormous territory.

⁶ The story of Mazeppa's adventurous career is too well known to need repetition.

⁷ The "booran," a well-known tempestuous wind, so called in Siberia.

⁸ "Talneek," a kind of creeping mossy plant.

⁹ A traditional conspirator in Russia.

¹⁰ Svyatoslav, the grandson of Rurik, the founder of the Varangian empire in Russia, and son of Igor. He was a brave prince of insatiable ambition and restlessness, the very ideal of turbulent barbarism. His conquests were principally in the south over the Bulgarians, undertaken partly at the instigation of Nicephorus Phocas, Emperor of the East. Svyatoslav naturally declined to give up the provinces he had conquered to the Byzantine emperor, but John Zimisce, the murderer and successor of Phocas, drove him out of the territories he had annexed, and the Russian prince was afterwards killed with a small band by a tribe called the Petchenegs. It was under the auspices of his son Wladimir that Christianity was introduced into Russia. Svyatoslav himself declined to follow the example of his mother Olga or Helena in this respect.

¹¹ Ivan Soosaneen, the peasant who misguided the Poles in their search for the young Czar Michael, and thus secured to Russia the very doubtful blessing of being ruled over by the Romanoff dynasty. Michael, the first of the family who sat on the throne, was the son of Fedor Nikitich, and was chosen Czar by the Muscovites when the direct line of Rurik became extinct in the person of Fedor, son of Ivan the Terrible. The Poles took advantage of the anarchy into which the interregnum plunged Russia, and by espousing the cause of the numerous false Demetriuses who arose, obtained a considerable footing in the country. Indeed, it was not till the next reign, that of Alexis, that they were again deprived of Smolensko, Kiëff, and the Ukraine.

¹² The fate of this unhappy prince is well known. Like Don Carlos of Spain, he perished by the decree and, possibly, by the hand of his father. His end has been variously stated. Eichhorn says that he was beheaded in prison, and Lamberty gives credence to the rumour that the Czar himself was the executioner. The charges made against him were never clearly stated. Peter reproached him with incapacity and want of emulation, reproaches which were proba-

bly deserved; but these were grounds for compelling him to abdicate the succession,—which indeed Alexis implored to be allowed to do,—and hardly justified the extreme penalty of death. It is probable, as Relaiëff appears to convey in the poem, that the prince became the instrument of the intrigues of the discontented part of the nation, especially of the priests and of the conservative party, whom Peter had outraged by his reckless reforms. Peter's anger against him was further roused by his flight to Vienna, where he placed himself under the protection of Charles VI. But at Naples, whither he had gone from Vienna, the Russian ambassador prevailed upon him to return, and submit himself to the clemency of his father, who wrote: "Return and I will love you more than ever; you shall be my beloved son." He did so, and was instantly arrested, and placed under trial before a high commission; the judges were not in favour of capital punishment being inflicted, but in spite of the abject submission of Alexis, the Czar was inexorable. A man of the feebleness of nature which Alexis exhibited could hardly have been really formidable to the ruthless Peter, and he might well have been allowed to retire, as he requested, to the solitude of a monastery. "There is no possible situation," says Gibbon, "in which I can sincerely approve the last act of the justice of a parent;" and all Voltaire's eloquence and the elaborately false reasons which he alleges to justify Peter's severity, fail in mitigating the horror which must be felt at such an atrocious deed. It is certainly singular to find the indefatigable apostle of humanity, the defender of la Barre and Calas, in the character of an apologist for one of the most savage pieces of despotic cruelty that even the annals of kings offer to the indignation of posterity.

The statement that the empress preferred a convent's cell to a palace is a slight euphemism on the part of the poet. As a matter of fact Eudocia, Peter's first wife, and mother of Alexis was not offered much choice in the matter but was imprisoned in a convent by the peremptory order of the Czar.

¹⁸ This poem, which unfortunately exists only in a fragmentary state, was intended to commemorate the exploits of a national hero Nalevaiko, who fell a victim to the vengeance of the Poles at the time when Little Russia was held in subjection to the Polish kingdom. The first fragment consists of a lament over the holy city of Kiëff; the second describes the deed which signalized the beginning of the

insurrection, the slaying of a Polish official; and the third and last contains a spirited defiance of tyranny, put in the form of a last confession made by Nalevaiko to an orthodox priest before starting on his fatal expedition. The outbreak was unsuccessful, Nalevaiko himself was taken prisoner and roasted to death before the walls of Warsaw in a brazen bull—a kind of Russian edition of the story of Phalaris's favourite punishment.

¹⁴ Battia captured Kiëff in 1248 A. D. Mangou Khan had been sent by him to make an attempt on the city. Michael who then reigned in Kiëff, assassinated his deputies, and fled into Hungary, and Battia took by assault and sacked the city.

¹⁵ The Uniates were members of the Greek Church who had reunited themselves with the Romish Church. They grew up as an ecclesiastical body towards the close of the 16th century, though the schism existed from a very much earlier date, and obtained a firm footing in Lithuania, then incorporated with Poland. The Emperor Nicholas's drastic method of fusing the Uniates with the orthodox Church again attracted some attention in the course of recent discussions, when the claims of Russia as a pre-eminently humane and civilizing power were urged on the consideration of Europe.

